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SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: ELECTORAL DATE ANNOUNCEMENT

HIGHLIGHTS DEEPER SURROUNDING ISSUES

1. Summary: Promises from the Interim Government of Haiti (IGOH) that the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) would announce election dates November 17 evaporated when the IGOH abruptly canceled the announcement at the last moment. The dates, which were decided in a meeting between MINUSTAH, the IGOH and the CEP Director General November 16, later won the preliminary endorsement of six of the nine CEP members. However, when the PM leaked the dates before the formal announcement, CEP president Mathurin refused to sign the letter setting the dates for the election. The government, journalists and the diplomatic corps were stood up at the National Palace with no ceremony to attend. The Prime Minister was calm after the canceled announcement and said that dates would likely be announced November 21, but on November 21 politicking on dates and procedures continued. End Summary.

Promised Calendar Announcement Ends In Debacle

2. Promises from the Interim Government of Haiti (IGOH) that it would announce definitive elections dates ended in a debacle on November 17 when the IGOH canceled the announcement at the last moment. Throughout the week, the IGOH, Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) and MINUSTAH had met to discuss dates. According to CEP director General Jacques Bernard, the IGOH and MINUSTAH decided November 16 to hold the first round on December 27 and the second round in conjunction with some local elections January 31. At the end of the meeting, the IGOH was to communicate the decision to the CEP through official channels and arrange a press conference December 17 at four p.m. to announce the dates.

Power Plays by Both Sides

3. Though six of the nine CEP members had provisionally agreed to December 27 earlier in the week, the CEP had not yet officially endorsed the new calendar when the Prime Minister told CNN the new dates were official. According to CEP members Pierre Richard Duchemin and Josepha Gauthier, CEP members felt the government had fixed the dates without their consent and felt the CNN interview was a power play to force the CEP to approve new calendar. The IGOH canceled the ceremony to officially announce the dates in the resulting imbroglio. According to the PM and Bernard, CEP President Max Mathurin refused to sign the letter establishing the dates for the election, and because the PM does not have the legal authority to set the dates, he was forced to cancel the ceremony.

New Dates Still Pending

4. Later in a conversation with the Charge, the PM calmly explained that the IGOH would probably announce the new dates November 21. CEP President Max Mathurin's Chief of Staff Paul Duchetallier said the CEP was discussing dates November 18 and would likely submit dates to IGOH in the afternoon of November 21. (Note: Neither the IGOH nor the CEP has announced any dates thus far. End Note) Duchetallier said CEP would likely recommend December 27 for the first round, January 29, 30 or 31 for the runoff, and local elections in mid-January. However Gauthier told Poloff in a November 21 meeting that although the CEP planned to meet to discuss dates, some members would likely ask for CEP Director General Bernard's resignation, which she believed would push the dates from today's agenda. Though she said she believed Bernard had her support of that of the five other members and he would emerge from the challenge, she saw the possible challenge as a tactic to delay fixing the dates.

5. Comment: According to CEP DG Jacques Bernard, CEP President Max Mathurin knew about the dates November 16 and failed to communicate the decision to the other CEP members making the executive decision about the dates a surprise to the CEP November 17. The PM's November 17 leak of the new

dates to the press only exacerbated the situation, making the CEP members feel the executive was trying to pressure them into the dates. Whether or not the inaction by Mathurin and the PM's leak were intentional they must be among the last such failings if elections are to take place before 2006. End Comment.

CARNEY